



THE MAGNET™



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Risk Management Tips

The Physician-Patient "Tug of War"

If you're wondering why so many patient office visits turn into a tug of war, it's partly because physicians and patients are often on different ends of the rope.

To the physician, illness is a disease process that can be measured and understood through laboratory tests and clinical observations. To the patient, illness is a disrupted life. Physicians who can't help bridge communication gaps with patients are more likely to end up in court.

Despite the fact that physicians and patients may be on opposite ends of the healthcare system, physicians who practice the following six strategies can help the physician-patient relationship deepen into a healing partnership:

1. Cultivate a patient-centered partnership – treat patients as human beings
2. While with the patient, check your posture and body language—sit down
3. Ask about his/her concerns and opinions with open-ended questions
4. To improve your patient's willingness to follow your recommendations, build mutual trust
5. Develop a system to communicate all test results to patients
6. Respect patients as experts in the experience of their illness

Aside from the typical challenges associated with bridging communication gaps with patients, some physicians experience this "tug of war" on a broader scale. A new theme in healthcare risk management is the physician whose persistent, problematic behavior can affect medical care delivery, anger patients or co-workers and possibly trigger a lawsuit. The current terminology for this individual is "disruptive physician." Specific treatment programs for disruptive physicians have been developed.

For more information or to see the complete article, visit us at www.magmutual.com/risk. ●

Coming up in the next MAGNET, The Physician-Patient "Tug of War" Part Two (How physicians can help patients learn to bridge communication gaps.)

Electronic Medical Records (EMRs)

The interest in Electronic Medical Record (EMR) systems is growing rapidly. News stories are appearing in the medical and general press almost every week.

Many practice and risk management experts now think that EMRs have potential for improving the quality of patient care, while reducing some of the risk in the practice of medicine.

EMRs clearly offer solutions to well-known follow-up and tracking concerns in the medical office. A few such applications include:

- **Issue:** Critical test and lab results get misrouted or misplaced; aren't entered into the medical record, or the results are not conveyed to the physician or communicated to the patient.

Potential solution: EMRs can provide for a seamless transfer of clinical information from office to laboratory, back to the office and the patient file, with safeguards to ensure that the physician has reviewed the results and the patient notified.

- **Issue:** Medications are sometimes prescribed without researching possible interactions with other prescriptions or patient allergies; dosage levels may be determined without full consideration of patient age, weight, etc.

Potential solution: EMRs can provide instant access to the latest drug information available from the manufacturers or from other resources.

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(Electronic Medical Records (EMRs), continued from page 1)

• **Issue:** Hard-to-read hand writing on charts, notes or prescriptions/ blurry faxes.

Potential solution: EMRs can eliminate the need for handwritten notes or prescriptions by allowing physicians to enter text directly into the system.

Prescription faxes could be eliminated by direct transmission to a pharmacy, or typed text printed on a form for the patient to take with them.

To help us understand how EMRs are being used or considered by our policyholders, we'd appreciate your completing our survey. (We'll publish the results in a future *MAGnet* issue.)

Note: For this survey, an EMR is defined as computer-based patient record and/or electronic health record containing one or more of the following:

- Progress Note Entry
- Integrated Patient Management
- Patient call log
- Laboratory and Radiology Interface
- Prescription Management
- Electronic communications and consult letter and tracking

Please respond by -

Internet: Visit www.magmutual.com/survey and complete the questions online

Fax: Complete the questions below and fax this page to: 678-226-0020

Mail: Complete the questions below and mail this page to: David Miller, MAG Mutual, Suite 120, 3025 Breckinridge Boulevard, Duluth, GA 30096

Phone: Call toll free, 888-217-2104 and provide your answers by phone

Physician or Office Manager:

1. Does your practice use an EMR? Yes No If no, please skip to question #4.

2. If yes, which EMR system do you use and which company provides it?

3. How satisfied are you with your current EMR and the service you received from the company that you chose? Please use a scale of 1-10 (10 being the most satisfied) _____ EMR _____ Company _____ (Then, please skip to #5 below)

For those not currently using an EMR:

4. If you do not have an EMR do you expect to purchase one, and if so when?

- Not currently planning to purchase
- YES, I'm planning to obtain an EMR within: 12 months 24 months More than 24 months

5. If planning to purchase an EMR, how much would your practice likely invest?

- \$10,000 \$50,000 +\$100,000 Other _____

For all respondents:

6. Your Specialty: _____ 7. Number of physicians in your practice: _____

If you have an EMR, may we call you with further questions? Yes No

If so, practice and contact name/phone number and/or email address: _____

If you have questions concerning this survey or EMRs, please contact David Miller, toll free, at **888-217-2104**.

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